



# BIRDS- EYE VIEW ON HYPNOTHERAPY A TECHNIQUE OF TREATMENT FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

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## ABSTRACT

Hypnotherapy or hypnosis considered to be an aid to psychotherapy remained to be least understood area of knowledge for the people for centuries. But with the work of Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) modern hypnosis started. It is the science of using the power of subconscious mind for identifying and developing human credentials. Now a days most clinicians agree on its effectiveness as a therapeutic technique. So, the science of hypnosis has been developing rigorously.

This paper is an attempt to have a general view of the concept of hypnotherapy.

**KEYWORDS:** Hypnotherapy, Hypnosis, Human Credentials, Therapeutic Technique.

## INTRODUCTION

Hypnotherapy or hypnosis is a type of “complementary and alternative medicine” treatment. It is usually considered as an aid to psychotherapy (counselling or therapy). Originated from the Greek word “hupnos” (means “sleep”) and “osis” (means “a state”), it suggests a process of putting a person to sleep. In fact, it is a trance-like state that may appear similar to sleep. In this state the person's attention is so focused that anything going on around is temporarily blocked out or ignored. In other words, it is a human condition involving focused attention, reduced peripheral awareness and enhanced capacity to respond to suggestions. It is the science of using the power of subconscious mind for identifying and developing human credentials.

Sometimes people used hypnosis and hypnotherapy interchangeably. But Hypnosis is a tool that can be used for therapeutic treatment and Hypnotherapy is the use of that tool. To put it in another way, hypnosis is a technique to hypnotherapy.

People have been practising hypnosis for thousands of years. It is considered as an established and most traditional form of psychiatric treatment. In many cultures and religions, it is regarded as the most ancient form of therapeutic treatment. In India it is a centuries old practice and has been exercised since Vedic times. The evidence of the use of hypnosis popularly known as “sammohan” during Vedic period, is found in the most revered text called Bhagavat Purana, most significant scriptures of Hinduism and the holy book in which Lord Vishnu illudes the demons to procure the Amrit Kumbh for devas (Swami Prabupada,1999). Even Bhagat Gita, a part of the great epic Mahabharata, a fiction story or a piece of history dating back to about 4000-5000B.C., a model of counselling and contemporary psychotherapy also gives a bright example of hypnosis where lord Krishna convinced prince Arjun to fight the righteous war against his kinsmen in battle of Mahabharata. It is no doubt a philosophical discussion between prince Arjun and Lord Krishna but guides followers of Hinduisms in most difficult times as a therapy of healing (Reddy, 2012; Vaishnav, 2009; Rao and Parvathidevi, 1974; Satyananda, 1972; Jeste and Vahia, 2008; Hegde, 2009; Balodhi and Keshavan, 2011).

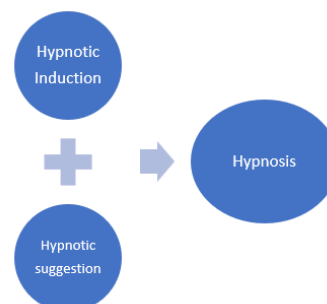
For centuries hypnosis was kept and projected as a mystery to the common man. So, it remained to be least understood area of knowledge for the people. But with the work of Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) modern hypnosis started. But the most prominent figure in modern hypnosis is American psychiatrist, Milton Erickson. He is considered unique in his approach because he was not interested in identifying the cause of the symptoms, instead his focus was on helping patients release their symptoms by stopping the defence functions. In the last half of 20th century, the American Psychological Association established the division 30 society of hypnosis. Since then, the science of hypnosis has been developing rigorously. But It's not, a recognized alternative to established treatments for major psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression. Although most clinicians now agree on its effectiveness as a therapeutic technique, it has remained to be controversial in the field of diagnosis and treatment. It does not have a robust body of scientific evidence. However, medical research continues to clarify how and when hypnosis can be used as a therapy tool. The good news is that hypnosis is safe, effective, and works very quickly compared to other types of therapy. But hypnosis is not a magic wand and, in most cases, results won't happen overnight.

## The process of hypnotherapy:

During a hypnotherapy session, people are guided through a process to induce a trance like state that helps them to focus their minds on a problem more deeply. The processes utilised in hypnotherapy includes:

**Induction:** Hypnotic induction is the first suggestion delivered during the process of hypnosis, though what it should consist of is still a matter of debate.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are typically expressed as implications that elicit seemingly involuntary Trusted Source responses from the participants, who do not believe they have much, or any, control (or agency) over the situation.



Hypnosis sometimes referred as hypnotic suggestion is usually done with the help of a therapist using verbal repetition and mental images. They are certified mental health professionals who are specially trained in this form of therapy. Under the suggestions of these hypnotists, a person may act on their inner impulse and lose sight of actions, thoughts and attention. As a result, a person can let their imaginations, impulses and actions run free without much control.

Studies show that under this type mental state, we are more open-minded and accept new ideas more readily. This helps in learning and long-term memory formation.

## Some of the popular methods used by the hypnotherapist are:

### 1.Fixed-gaze induction

In this method the hypnotist waves a pocket watch or something of that sort in front of a person's eyes and the person is put to sleep. This technique draws the attention of a subject onto a repetitive and boring clock swing for long enough to induce hypnosis. However, the effect is

### 2. Rapid Overloading of Brain

This is a widely used method by stage hypnotists. The hypnotist bombards a subject with strong, forceful and convincing commands that overload the subject's mind. Eventually, the subject gives up his or her conscious control over the situation.

### 3. Progressive Relaxation Technique

Currently, most hypnotherapists employ this method. Usually, the subject lies comfortably on a couch. The hypnotherapist will guide you step by step on how to relax yourself and may ask you to imagine a visual and fix your attention on it.

#### 4. Rocking Chair

You may have been a good hypnotist by rocking your baby to sleep. By getting out of balance, we can easily draw the subject's attention. Due to its fixed and repetitive nature, the person slowly enters into hypnosis.

Even though it may seem like the hypnotherapist is doing all the work or "making" someone become hypnotized, it's actually the individual who is allowing themselves to relax. According to Anthony Gitch "all hypnosis is 'self-hypnosis'".

However, everyone cannot be hypnotized. One study suggests that about 10 percent of the population is highly hypnotizable. Although it's possible that the rest of the population could be hypnotized, but they're less likely to be receptive to the practice. In fact, it isn't a truth serum. For that reason, doctors and hypnotists advise against using these. Despite the pejorative image display of hypnosis and misconceptions surrounding it, hypnosis still has numerous applications in contemporary medicine.

The American Medical Association in 1958 and the American Psychological Association in 1960 approved the use of hypnosis as an adjunct treatment and its contemporary applications in four major areas viz.: behavioural, psychological, medical, and self-development.

Besides the 1996 report by the National Institute of Health Technology Assessment Panel considered it as an effective and viable solution for the treatment of pain associated with cancer and many other chronic pain conditions. Hypnosis has also been used as an adjunct cognitive behavior therapy for smoking cessation.

One of the commonest disorders found in the practice of gastroenterology is irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). However, emotional stress, anger, and depression negatively affect IBS, thereby worsen the symptoms of the disorder. The intervention that has empirically demonstrated to be more efficacious in treating IBS is the use of hypnosis as an adjunct to cognitive behavior therapy.

Hypnosis has also been used to facilitate delivery in obstetrics, and shorter labor, and requires the use of significantly less analgesic medications. It is also employed in many ways as a highly efficient and flexible tool to reduce anxiety, increase responsiveness, interrupt negative ruminations, and establish positive expectancy.

It is used to improve pulmonary functioning in asthmatic patients with high and medium hypnotisability.

Hypnosis fulfils the research criteria in clinical psychology as it is a well-established effective treatment for headache and migraine. No risks of adverse reactions or side effects are produced by hypnosis. Besides this decreases the cost of medication associated to conventional medical treatments.

Hypnotic techniques are also helpful in managing the patients' gender ambivalence, identity, sexual orientation, preferences, and functioning difficulties. Sport hypnosis helps enhance performance and well-being of an athlete or a user.

However, hypnotherapy conducted by a trained therapist is considered as a complementary or safe alternative to present day orthodox medication for numerous ailments. So, it's important to use a certified hypnotist or hypnotherapist who will create a structured plan to help you to reach your individual goals.

#### Tips for hypnotic suggestions:

When making suggestions it is necessary to follow these tips:

1. Say it with conviction: Imagine the words being said gently but with conviction and ensure the tone is reassuring, confident and positive.
2. Phrase suggestions in the present tense
3. Make suggestions realistic: Avoid over-ambitious suggestions.
4. Repeat the suggestions: State the suggestions many times during the hypnosis. Repetition of an idea can help drive home the point.

#### How does hypnosis work:

How hypnosis works isn't completely understood. However, it's commonly believed that in the deep state of focus and relaxation is achieved with hypnosis. Your conscious mind is quieted and You're able to tap into the part of your brain where your thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, sensations, emotions, memory and behaviours originate. In this state, you're more open to gentle guidance from your hypnotherapist to help you modify or replace the unconscious thoughts that are driving your current behavior.

#### How do people describe the hypnotic experience?

People describe hypnosis in different ways. You may feel like you're "zoned in" or in a trance-like state — so focused that you're able to block out surrounding distractions. Have you ever been so focused on a TV show or so entrenched in a good book that you don't hear your family talking around you or even your dog barking? This experience is somewhat similar to how you might feel while

hypnotized. Many people say they feel calm and relaxed despite their increased concentration. Most described it as a pleasant experience.

#### Is hypnosis used as the sole treatment:

Hypnosis is usually used along with other therapies and treatments, as part of a complete total treatment plan. The decision to use hypnotherapy in a clinical setting as a sole treatment or as an add-on treatment in psychotherapy or traditional medicine is made in consultation with a qualified professional who's trained in the use and limitations of hypnotherapy.

#### What's the typical length of treatment with hypnotherapy:

There's no typical length. Treatment varies depending on what and how severe the issue is. Hypnotherapy may take many sessions.

Despite its use since the 1700s, hypnotherapy continues to have sceptics in the medical community. However, it's becoming a more accepted and recognized form of therapy. The number of certified and licensed medical professionals incorporating hypnotherapy in their practice is increasing.

Scientific evidence supporting the benefits of hypnotherapy has been limited, but is growing. Some studies show "promising" results or "may be helpful in" conclusions. The strongest evidence supporting the use of hypnotic treatments comes from research on hypnosis for treating pain, IBS and PTSD symptoms. Most medical associations and organizations state that more studies are needed to draw meaningful conclusions about the effectiveness of hypnotherapy.

#### What type of person benefits the most from hypnosis:

The person most likely to benefit is the person who's highly motivated to overcome an issue. Like any other treatment, hypnosis may be helpful for certain conditions or in certain people, but it can also be unhelpful.

It may not be appropriate for people with severe mental health issues, such as psychotic symptoms, including hallucinations and delusions. It might also be inappropriate for someone who uses drugs or alcohol. The use of hypnosis for memory retrieval is largely unsupported by research. Caution is also advised regarding its use in managing stressful events from early life. The use of hypnosis in these situations may create false memories, especially if unintended suggestions are given, and could cause more distress and anxiety.

#### Pros of hypnotherapy:

Hypnotherapy offers the potential to help treat your medical conditions without the need for invasive therapies or additional medications. Therapists consider hypnotherapy a safe treatment option, with minimal side effects.

While it may not work for everyone, hypnotherapy is what's known as a complementary therapy. A person can use hypnotherapy in addition to other treatments for depression to enhance an overall sense of well-being, lift mood, and boost feelings of hopefulness. Hypnotherapists use it to treat a number of conditions, including:

1. Anxiety
2. Chronic pain
3. Concentration problems
4. irritable bowel syndrome
5. Smoking control
6. Teeth grinding

A person with depression experiences a wide variety of emotions. According to the University of New Hampshire, hypnotherapy can help a person learn to reduce and/or better control feelings of anxiety, stress, and sadness. Hypnotherapy is also used to treat negative behaviors that could be worsening a person's depression. These behaviors may include smoking and poor eating and sleeping habits.

#### Cons of hypnotherapy:

Hypnotherapy does have some risks. The most dangerous is the potential to create false memories (called confabulations). Some other potential side effects are headache, dizziness, and anxiety. However, these usually fade shortly after the hypnotherapy session.

People considering hypnotherapy should first consult their doctor or psychiatrist. It is possible that hypnotherapy could worsen symptoms. However, People suffering from delusions, hallucinations, or other psychotic symptoms might not be the best candidates for hypnotherapy.

It's also possible that hypnotherapy is not an effective treatment method as the therapy requires a person to focus and enter a trance state of hypnosis. For some people, this is very difficult. Despite the pejorative image display of hypnosis and misconceptions surrounding it, hypnosis still has numerous applications in contemporary medicine.

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